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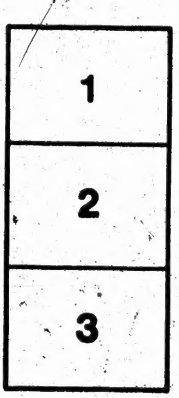

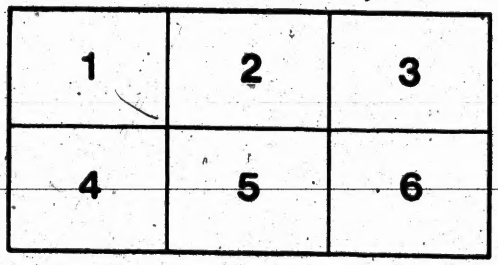

[*Third Thousand, Enlarged.*]

Church Membership of Children.

BY REV. JOHN MUNRO, WALLACE.

THIS Tract is published at the request of several who feel the want of a brief selection of passages of Scripture, relating to the privileges of children in the Church of God. The texts are generally abbreviated. A few facts are added. May the blessing of the Lord accompany it.

I. As children have a place assigned to them in families and nations, so God has assigned to them a place in His Church. Of this ample proof is given in His Word. We there find that children are objects of His special favour. Being sinners, children require a Saviour—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Heb. xiii. 6; John xiv. 6. As there is but one Saviour, so there is but one Church, which is—"Built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."—Eph. ii. 18–20. "This is he that was in the Church in the wilderness."—Acts vii. 38. Children are particularly specified in the Abrahamic covenant, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and *thy seed* after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant to be a God unto thee, *and to thy seed after thee.*"—Gen. xvii. 7.

1. Children were regenerated and sanctified. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee."—Jer. i. 5. Of the child Abijah it is said, "In him is found some good thing toward the Lord God, of Israel."—1 Kings xiv. 13. "Obadiah feared the Lord from his youth."—1 Kings xvii. 12. These gracious works of the Holy Spirit are strikingly manifested in the case of the "child Samuel," who, with his parents, "worshipped the Lord in Shiloh."—1 Saml. i. 28;—"and ministered before the Lord being a child."—chap. ii. 18. "The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men."—v. 26. He was taught at this early age to know the Lord.—"Samuel answered, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."—iii. 1–10.

2. Children are mentioned in the renewal of the covenant.—Deut. xxix. 10–25. "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains . . . *your little ones*, your wives . . . That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day." The parents are the contracting parties for their children, yet the little ones stand before the Lord, in their own right. "Moses called unto *all Israel.*"—v. 2.

3. Children were called to public worship. "Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, *gather the children and*

these that suck the breasts."—Joel ii. 15–17. So in the time of Jehoshaphat—"and all Judah stood before the Lord, with *their little ones*, their wives and *their children*.—2 Chron. xx. 1–13. "He will bless them that fear the Lord, *both small and great*."—Ps. cxv. 13.

4. Children entered the house of the Lord at three years old, received their daily portion, took part in the worship of God, and had their names recorded.—2 Chron. xxxi. 15–18. This was in accordance with the command of the Lord.—Deut. xii. 5–11. "But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose . . . thither thou shalt come . . . ye and your *households* . . . and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons and your daughters, &c."

5. Children have promises of spiritual and temporal blessings. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the *heart of thy seed*, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."—Deut. xxx. 5, 6. "They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and *their offspring with them*."—Isa. lxv. 23. "I will pour my Spirit *upon thy seed*, and my blessing *upon thine offspring*.—Isa. lxiv. 3.

6. Children had the word of God read to them. Moses commanded—"Thou shalt read this law before Israel—gather the people together, men and women *and children*, and thy strangers that are within thy gates—that they may . . . learn, and fear the Lord your God—and that *their children which have not known any thing*, may hear and learn and fear the Lord your God," &c.—Deut. xxxi. 10–13. "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, *and the little ones*."—Josh. vii. 34, 35.

7. Like Abraham, children "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith."—Rom. iv. 11. "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you *and thy seed after thee*; every man child among you shall be circumcised."—Gen. xvii. 10. "And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac, being eight days old, as God had commanded him."—Gen. xxi. 4; Ex. iv. 24–26. Circumcision was not a ceremonial observance—it was, like the Sabbath, instituted long before the time of Moses. "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers.") John vii. 22.

II. In the New Testament the Church, with its privileges, is extended to all nations.—Matt. xxviii. 19. It is not a new or a different church; Jeremiah compares it to a "green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit."—chap xi 16. And in reference to the Gentiles being united with it, it is said—"Thou, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree."—Rom. xi. 17. Again—"Made nigh by the blood of Christ." "For through him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father."—Eph. ii. 11–18.

The membership of children was never revoked, cancelled, or withdrawn. It is contained in the commission,—"Go teach all nations."—Children form an essential part of every nation. Had children been excluded there must have been a positive intimation to that effect, but neither Christ nor his Apostles ever hinted at this; on

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the contrary, Christ owned and received them as part of his church.—Mark x. 13–16. Therefore, the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant—which in substance is the covenant of grace, still remain to them. "God preached the gospel before to Abraham"—all the members of his family received the seal of the covenant. The same gospel is to be extended to all nations; children in these nations, as in the family of Abraham, must have a right to gospel privileges. Therefore it is said, "Then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."—Gal. iii. 7–9. Accordingly we find in the New Testament, as in the Old, that

1. Children are regenerated and sanctified—John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb."—Luke i. 15. Of Timothy it is said, "From a child (infant) thou hast known the Holy Scripture." 2 Tim. iii. 15. So, Timothy, like Samuel, had saving knowledge.

2. Children have promises—"The promise is unto you, and to *your children*.—Act ii. 39. "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people"—"for all shall know me *from the least to the greatest*."—Heb. viii. 10, 11. "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's *seed*, and *heirs* according to the promise."—Gal. iii. 29.

3. Children are addressed in 2d John—"The Elders unto the elect Lady *and her children*, whom I love in the truth." Paul, in writing to the Churches of Ephesus and Colosse, specifies *children* among the several classes whom he addressed as "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus." These titles were never given to any who had not received the seal of the covenant,—circumcision or baptism.

4. Jesus received and acknowledged the praises of children in the temple, and said—"Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of *babes and sucklings* thou hast perfected praise?"—Matt. xxi. 16. They are part of His great army by which he might still the enemy and the avenger.—Ps. viii. 2.

5. Christ spoke of children as members of His Church—"Jesus took a child and set him by him, and said, whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me, &c."—Luke ix. 47, 48. Again, "Suffer *the little children* to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." "And he took them in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."—Mark x. 13–16. He thus fulfilled the prophecy—"He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom," (Isa. xl. 11.), and also plainly declared that little children were members of His visible Church.

6. Children are under the special care of the Angels—"And whoso shall receive one *such little child* in my name receiveth me. Take heed that ye despise not one of these *little ones*; for I say unto you, That in heaven *their angels* do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. xviii. 5–10. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."—Heb. i. 14. Angels watch over *the heirs of salvation*; "little ones" have the same guardians; therefore, heirs of salvation—consequently, infants must be members of the church of God.

7. Children in the New Testament received the seal of the covenant—a noted event in the families of the descendants of

Abraham,—as well as in that of his own; This is very manifest in the case of Zacharias and Elizabeth. "On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child," Luke i. 59;—and in that of Joseph and Mary, "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcision of the child, his name was called JESUS."—Luke ii. 21. After the ascension of our Lord, it is recorded that children—as a matter of course—continued to receive the seal of the covenant, while parental responsibility, in relation to this ordinance, remained as formerly. "I baptized also the household of Stephanas," 1 Cor. i. 16; and so of several other families.

III. That children are entitled to the privileges of the Church, because of their relation to their parents, is recognised throughout the Bible. "You and *your seed*"—"*your little ones*"—"the heart of *thy seed*"—"you and *your children*"—as in some of the texts already given. Again, "*Thy seed's seed*," saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever."—Isa. lix. 21. "Ye fathers provoke not *your children*—but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."—Eph. vi. 4. "I know Abraham, that he will command *his children* and his household after him."—Gen. xviij. 19. God promises to bless his parental faithfulness. When parents believed and were baptized, their children were baptized with them. "Lydia was baptized and *her household*."—Acts xvi. 15; as "Abraham and all his house were circumcised in the self same day."—Gen. xvii. 23–26. The Jailor "was baptized, *he and all his*."—Acts xvi. 33, (see Deut. xiv. 26). The commission of the angel seen in vision by Cornelius, (Acts x. 2, 3), included his family—"Send men . . . . for Simon" . . . . "Who shall tell thee words, whereby *thou, and all thy house*, shall be saved."—Acts xi. 13, 14. We read of the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus.—Rom. xvi. 10, 11. "Onesiphorous."—2 Tim. i. 17. "Crispus believed in the Lord with *all his house*." Acts xviii. 8. In these families there must have been infants, who, with their parents, received baptism, the seal of the covenant. Some of these families were connected with the Church at Corinth, to whom Paul wrote—"Else were *your children unclean; but now they are holy*."—1 Cor. vii. 14. Baptism alone gave those Gentile children the right to be called holy, *i. e.*, set apart, as others are not. It has ever been the duty of parents to dedicate their children to God.—Ex. xiii. 2; Luke ii. 23. "For henceforth there shall no more come into thee the *uncircumcised* and the *unclean*."—Isa. lii. 1. These terms are convertible, and apply equally to the unbaptized.

To withhold baptism from children is to rob them of their privileges, and degrade them below the place they occupied in the Old Testament: while, instead of extending, it makes the *New* more contracted than the *Old*. It is thus manifest that God regarded children as members of His church,—wrought in them by His Spirit, and gave them the seal of the covenant. These favours he never withdrew. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."—Rom. xi. 29. The dictates of nature agree with this doctrine of inspiration. "An interesting illustration of this is brought out in the history of the Baptists in Jamaica, whose converts brought their children to be baptized, and thus acknowledged as the "Lambs of the flock." The

pastors, after an ineffectual resistance, compromised the matter by proposing to lay their hands on them and bless them."

Baptisms have been times of refreshing in Scotland, even like the Lord's Supper. One who was present when Rev. Mr. Hogg, of Kiltearn, baptized a child, records that "the power and presence of the Lord was so signal and observable that many were made to say they never felt more of the authority of the Lord in any ordinance; especially when he pronounced the name of the persons of the Godhead over the child." *Wodrow MS. p.* 133. The following extract from the memoir (p. 380) of the Rev. J. McDonald, of Calcutta, son of the late Rev. Dr. McDonald—"Apostle of the North"—shows the holy exercise of a believing parent in dedicating his child by baptism:—Sabbath, November 24, 1839. This day, in the kind providence of God, I have been permitted and enabled to dedicate my little offspring to my covenant God in Baptism; and for this I give thanks. O, what a privilege is it! I trust I have had communion with the Lord in this deed, if ever I had it. Many encouragements have I felt, and no misgivings as to infant baptism in its faithful form. Yea, I praise God, for such an ordinance. I know God's willingness to bless infants. I know that he did of old receive them into His covenant by seal. I know also that infants are capable of enjoying the blessings of the covenant of grace—that the want of faith in those who are incapable of faith is just as applicable to salvation as to baptism, and therefore constitutes no argument against it. I believe that the seal of the covenant will be just as valid to the child when it afterwards believes, as if baptized when adult—that it is a great privilege to have it externally united with the church, and for a parent to say, "This, my child, has been solemnly and publicly given to God—it is federally holy." I believe that the commission of Christ included the children of believers, and that the apostles baptized such; and I know that the holiest of men in all ages have had communion with their God in this ordinance. But why enlarge? O my Lord! I bless Thee for saving me from falling into the cold and forbidding doctrines of Antipædo-baptism! O give me grace to improve Thine ordinance! Look in mercy on my little Catherine! O Spirit of the Lord! inhabit her, regenerate her! I have given her to Thee—make her Thine own! Bless mother, father, and daughter. O bless us! All glory be to God!

IV. The baptism of children is confirmed by history.

Justin Martyr, who wrote about 40 years after the apostolic age, says, "We have not received the carnal, but spiritual circumcision by baptism—and it is enjoined to all persons to receive it in the same way." He evidently considered baptism as coming in the place of circumcision. Irenæus, who wrote about 67 years after the Apostles, says, "Christ came to save all persons by Himself, who by Him are regenerated unto God, *infants, little ones, youths*, and elderly persons. When Christ gave his disciples the command of regenerating unto God, he said, "Go teach all nations, baptising them," &c. Origen's testimony is "Infants were baptized for the remission of sins." (See 1 John ii. 12.) He speaks of infant baptism as the "usage of the church," and "received as an order from the Apostles."

At the Council of Carthage, A. D. 253, composed of 66 pastors,

with Cyprian as president, a question was submitted by *Fidus*, whether an infant might be baptised before it was eight days old. *There was no doubt that infants ought to be baptized*—the query was whether, as in circumcision, it was necessary to wait till the eighth day. The Council decided that it was not. Chrysostom says, "The grace of baptism gives cure without pain, and this for infants as well as men. Augustine, in pleading against Pelagius, asks, "Why are infants baptized for the remission of sins, if they have no sin?" Pelagius replied, "Baptism ought to be administered to infants." "I never heard of any, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants."

It can be proved from engravings and inscriptions upon ancient tomb-stones that children were baptized in the first centuries. It can also be shown from history that for fifteen hundred years after Christ, the practice of infant baptism was universal. The Ana-Baptists in Germany—1537—were the first professed christians, who, on the principles of "Modern Baptists," refused baptism to infants. If there is no express law for infant baptism, neither is there such for the change of the Sabbath; therefore, Antipædo-Baptists, upon their own principles, should all be Seventh Day Baptists, and observe the Jewish Sabbath.

V. The baptism of John was not christian baptism, and was set aside by the Apostle. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him, which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."—Acts xix. 1–5. John said, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."—Matt. iii. 11. Our Lord, when about 30 years of age, in commencing His public ministry was baptized in conformity with the law relating to the priests—Ex. xl. 12; Num. iv. 3. "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water."—Matt. iii. 16. He went up *by His own act*—a proof that He was not dipped and lifted out. In ancient engravings He is represented standing in the Jordan while John poured water on His head. "Philip and the eunuch went both into the water."—Acts. viii. 38. It will not do to "*infer*" that immersion took place there, or to maintain that *baptizo* signifies "to dip, and nothing but to dip." "The Israelites were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."—1 Cor. x. 2. "And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea *upon dry ground*."—Ex. xiv. 22. They were not immersed, yet they were baptized, *infants and all*. "The clouds poured out water."—Psa. lxxvii. 17. "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"—Luke xii. 50. Jesus was not *immersed* in His blood. In the garden His sweat was as it were *great drops of blood falling down to the ground*.—Luke xxii. 44. How absurd to say, "He will *immerse* you in the Holy Ghost and in fire!!" Baptism *with* water represents baptism with the Holy Ghost—which was conferred by descending. "There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it SAT upon each of them."—Acts ii. 3. "I will POUR OUT of my spirit upon all flesh."—v. 17. "The Holy Ghost FELL on all." "On the Gentiles

was POURED OUT the gift of the Holy Ghost."—Acts x. 44, 45. "The Holy Ghost SHED on us."—Titus iii. 6. "I will POUR water upon him that is thirsty." "I will POUR my Spirit."—Isa. xlv. 3. "He shall SPRINKLE many nations."—Isa. lii. 15. "Then will I SPRINKLE clean water upon you."—Ezek. xxxvi. 25. "Your hearts SPRINKLED."—Heb. x. 22; ix. 19, 20. "SPRINKLING of the blood of Jesus Christ."—1 Peter i. 2. "Holy Ghost SENT DOWN from heaven."—v. 12. Again—"Buried with Christ by baptism into death,"—"planted in the likeness of His death,"—"crucified with Him,"—"dead with Christ."—Rom. vi. 3. "Risen with Him" (Col. ii. 11) refer to our having communion with Him in His burial and resurrection. We are not at liberty to interpret these metaphors by a literal reference to a fanciful watery grave,—a tomb in a rock, or a superstitious use of the Cross in baptism. It was customary with the Jews, on receiving proselytes from the heathen, to wash them before circumcision. This practice was adopted by some of the churches at an early period preparatory to baptism—which was administered by pouring—in this washing or immersion the candidate was always NAKED. There is the very same evidence in favour of immersing, divested of all clothing, that there is for immersing at all; so that these two practices must stand or fall together. Wall says, "The ancient christians when they were baptized by immersion were baptized naked, whether they were men, women, or children." "Moreover, as baptism is a washing, they judged it should be the washing of the body, not of the clothes."—*Chap. XV. Part II.* The Mennonites—Baptists in Holland—have given up immersion because of the difficulties attending it; and for more than a hundred years have been in the practice of pouring water on the head of the candidate.

An American missionary at Constantinople, writing to one of the Editors of the *Congregationalist*, under date May 9, 1849, makes the following judicious observations:—

"Without any literary apparatus to help me, I have for many years felt confident that the apostles and *primitive* Christians did not baptize by immersion. I do not find in the climate, dress, or social customs of the East, anything to *lead* to *immersion* for baptism, though their religious customs may have led to it. The *geography of Palestine* is much opposed to its having been the prevailing custom. The only river with water in it the whole year is the Jordan. The *Arish*, 'south of Gaza,' has no water a part of the year. The houses of ancient Jerusalem, as appears by the ruins of the city, had cisterns and not tanks. Water to drink is not kept in tanks, i. e., which are open, except in case of large reservoirs. People would not be allowed to defile the water in such open reservoirs by being bathed for immersion, as in the case of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost. In various places along the roads in Palestine, are to be found wells of fifteen feet in diameter, with steps to go down to them, for the purpose of supplying travellers. It is by a flight of steps that one arrives at the pool of Siloam. In the quarantine at Jaffa we *descended* to the well by a flight of, I should think, forty steps, there being besides a perpendicular opening. Towards Enon, near to Salim, in a company of twenty-five horsemen, we passed on to reach it by night, because

we wished to encamp there as there was much water, or many waters, for ourselves and horses. The cliffs around have several eyes, or springs, that give out each little driblets of water.—How absurd, if John, *wherever* he was, baptised by immersion, that he went to Enon because it was only there he could get enough! The crowd would need an hundredfold more to drink than he would need to immerse with. As for the 'many waters,' it is equivalent to the phrase 'Saratoga waters,' as often used for 'the springs,' or, as we say in Turkey, of a hill near Constantinople, where are scattered several springs, 'There are many waters there,' always using the plural."

Throughout the New Testament there is not one example, or even a word, to countenance baptism, as practised by immersionists. There is "One body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, ONE BAPTISM, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."—Eph. iv. 4–6.

The "one baptism" is the formula in which the ordinance is to be administered, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—it has no reference to the *mode* in which the element is to be applied. The same doctrine is held forth throughout scripture—and that the Holy Spirit is the one bond of unity in the Church. "For by one spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles . . . . And have been all made to drink into one spirit."—1 Cor. xii. 13.

Those who receive the seals of the covenant of grace have the promise that God will be their Father, Jesus Christ will be their Saviour, and the Holy Ghost their sanctifier—and are therefore bound to love and fear the Lord—not as slaves, but as children whom He loves and whom He will in the end bring to heaven. It may be added—Christian biography abounds with proof of the indwelling and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit in many of the *infant* members of the Church—their death bed testimony as to the love of Jesus—and the holy lives of others of *them* who were spared to see a good old age—all go to show that multitudes of children are "lively" members of the kingdom of grace and heirs of the kingdom of glory. The penalty to an Israelite who neglected the *seal* of the covenant was, "that soul shall be cut off," &c.—Gen. xvii. 14. No Israelite more honoured or favoured of God than Moses; yet, because he neglected to circumcise his child, "The Lord met him and sought to kill him." The performance of the rite saved his life.—Ex. iv. 23–26. Let believing parents, who neglect or contemn baptism—the New Testament seal of the same covenant, to which their children have a right, reflect upon this incident in the life of Moses.

HALIFAX, N. S.
PRINTED BY THE "NOVA SCOTIA PRINTING COMPANY."
CORNER OF BACKVILLE AND GRANVILLE STS.

3 Cents each or $2.00 per 100.